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CHRISTMAS WITH THE SPIRITS

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"CHRISTMAS EVE" WITH THE SPIRITS.

THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE.

"Christmas Eve" With the Spirits;

OR,

THE CANON'S WANDERINGS THROUGH WAYS UNKNOWN.

WITH SOME FURTHER TIDINGS OF THE LIVES OF

SCROOGE AND TINY TIM.

WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS.
Drawn and Engraved by Messrs. A. R. Dorrington and Co.

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PREFACE.

To the Reader,—"Pleasant Christmas Greetings." I regret that my story has lost the pleasant side with which I had endowed it when first I had it shadowed forth to me, but as my subject expanded itself before me, I felt it would be more desirable to try to do some little good where so much is needed, than to flatter the good already existing, by some highly-coloured picture of its success. Of the scenes and characters I have only to say that many may be deemed improbable and unreal; I regret to add, they are only *too* real, and that each scene has had an origin in the life which is around and about us: every actor—a living counterpart.

I have always esteemed anonymous publications as only to be excused for two purposes. First, for any Author who, having written and published many works with his

name attached, wishing to test whether his writing deteriorates or improves, publishes one anonymously, and consequently without any *prestige* attaching to his name.

Secondly, for any Author publishing his first work and wishing it to be fairly tested by its own merits alone. All other anonymous publications I deem most inexcusable, and to signify, in one word, "cowardice." For one of these reasons, therefore, I have published this work without any other name than that of

THE AUTHOR.

CHRISTMAS, 1869.

Illustrations.

PAGE

1. Frontispiece—The Cathedral Close . 2
2. Retribution—Passion Enthroned: God Dethroned 47
3. Wrecked by Man: Saved by God . 55
4. "Home" Where Poverty is no Crime 69
5. Even in Death "God Bless us Every One 85

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Christmas Eve with the Spirits.

CHAPTER I.

SLEEP reigned over the world: all mortals succumbed to its beneficent influence, excepting those nightly wanderers who turn the darkness of night into a still deeper darkness of their guilt, and those for whom duty forbids their relaxing to its happy influence.

I, too, "Henry Matthews," Canon to the Cathedral and in residence, naturally succumbed to its influence also, and laid my head upon its pillow.

. . . . . .

What impels me forward, and to where? Am I asleep or awake? Asleep? No, I cannot be, and yet! why seeking the Cathedral at this hour? It is no midnight service of the Old Year passing into the New, the only time in the year upon which we open these time-honoured doors. But see! a light illumines those storied windows, richly dight, so others must be there before me, strange as it may be. The

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doors locked, and yet all alight! I must enter and find how this gross negligence of the rules has been perpetrated. The door creaks! even louder than the key did in the lock. I divide the sanctuary hangings before the door, and, O Heaven! what a scene meets my sight! A brilliancy which has no need of such minor effects as gas, or daylight, lights, I might say, fires up the vast edifice, showing every rounded column and sculptural detail in their most vivid outlines. Above, below, around, sounds indescribable; the very air harmonious and yet so drear: the very atmosphere seems thick with existence! A congregation such as never before witnessed; not seats alone occupied, every space, and even the air, eloquent with life. Life, and yet what life? Such as I had never before witnessed, such as it is not given to mortals to understand!

Forms I had known long since; Faces, whose outlines, once so familiar, seemed as the breaking in of a dream, so long absent had they been from my vision: none are the usual attendants of the Cathedral, not even inhabitants of the city, and yet they have been. Yes, "have been!" A light dawns upon me—these are those who "once were!" I am with the dead, the dead and yet alive! Am I one of them? When did I die? I cannot remember! All seems as awful as it is inexplicable. A form approaches—one quite recently taken from his post on earth, his post a sacred one and my chief.

My Lord Bishop?

Take back thine hand, mortal: the inhabitants of the tomb have done with familiar greetings. No longer either "My Lord Bishop," I am now spirit with spirit: you are to me only mortal—the representative of mortality!

Spirit, then, Good Spirit, tell me where I am? why is this? who am I?

Spirit alone, call me not Good Spirit! Know you not, (and yet how could mortality know) that humility was the chief Christ-like influence that I possessed so little of when living, and now repent the want so bitterly? where you are is Christ's earthly mansion, his priests' spiritual home, called amongst mortals "Cathedral": familiar to you, it should be most loved, most holy. Why is this? Know, mortal, that we herald the sacred feast of The Nativity, Holy Christmas, a time of worldly revel for mortals, for immortals it is a time for jubilant adoration, that Christ alone most merciful, most holy, most pure, permits the Church triumphant, with one voice, to raise the Sanctus and the Alleluia, before the sacred manger of His birth. Once more the Sacred Feast draws nigh. Who are you? A man of earth, earthy. Why permitted thus to enter here at such a time I know not, it is not permitted. To me you bring back the awful memories of the past—my so-called priesthood, ministry to the world, hollow hypocrisy. In my hands "the Bread of Life" permitted to dwell, and yet those hands greedy after lucre! awful desecra-

tion! From my lips the words of absolution permitted to utter forth, how rarely penitents sought by me to be brought back to the love of Christ. Shepherd and Bishop of souls indeed!—Shepherd, rather, of sloth. Minister of absolution and needing it myself, yet seeking it not. I was called "That holy man:" my life was called "holy," and yet I was a Prince of the world alone: I in riches, my life one of ease, the lambs of my flock were starved in those Sacraments which I was appointed Christ's Shepherd to minister. The priests who called me "Lord," often in most dread poverty, and I, in possession of the mammon of the world, yet withheld it, are now with riches most precious, whilst I in poverty!

But in life you were esteemed most noble, most generous, most learned, Spirit!

Yes, noble, because I served the world: generous, because my name always accompanied my gifts for the world's adulation: learned, in that which is now the wildest folly. A child-like love of Christ, outside the world's notice, would have left me now, indeed, most noble: to have lived thus, would have shown, the wisest of learning: but why speak I of the past? There is no past road to be retrodden by me, filled with that which should make it a holy path.

I cannot understand, surely your life was a blameless one? Your name was in men's mouths as one who fulfilled his duties worthily —doubt was expressed that an able suc-

cessor could be found to you! A great orator, no extreme man, high in courtly influence, you were a main instrument in passing laws to curb the enthusiasm of your clergy, your diocese was a stranger to excesses in zeal, of course most misguided and misdirected when found to run counter to public opinion.

Yea, your recital I dispute not: all these things were my attributes, but in nothing was I Apostolical. That which was expected from me by those who raised me to that high dignity, I fulfilled. God expected much more, that I fulfilled not. The measure of our opportunities is Heaven's scale of what is expected from us. Mine so great, and yet so fruitless! I was an orator, I was not unconscious of my power, and to the full I exercised it, but mainly its subjects were alas, the laws which perish—fit subject for others' oratory, not for a Shepherd of souls! When I preached, I preached for greatness. Before the earthly throne I was often summoned as a courtly priest, who avoided home questions, failed to rebuke vice, known openly though it were, but chose fields of oratory, which were suited to develop my powers, and "please:" neither was I an extreme man: my caution was an attribute much trusted by Ministers of State, of which I myself was very proud: energy in my eyes was esteemed heresy, a most erroneous thing, from which preferments were to be held, at which anathemas were to be hurled, for which laws made to crush:

this very lukewarmness was needed on my part by earth, by Heaven, it is disowned: and God requires not of any man to be fearful in His warfare. Would to Heaven that I had been as a fisherman's son, like the saintly father's of the Church—been called in my poverty to be indeed a "Shepherd of the sheep:" had held the gold and the power that perisheth in their true value, and made my sure foundation on a rock.

The stately form, robed in the priestly garments in which he had ministered when in life, slowly passed away: his voice mingling with the multitude. Now, I noticed that as he slowly moved along, his shadowy form displayed distinctly through the vestments in which he was habited; and that yet within, the gaunt skeleton form, showed distinctly under the form of flesh: thus three shadowy outlines—first, the form as in life: secondly, the form as in nature: and thirdly, the form as in the tomb: and thereat I marvelled greatly, my spirit failing me also with fear.

Many brushed past me, and yet I felt no touch: some barred my passage, but no resistance was apparent: amidst them all, I was yet unharmed, therefore I feared not so greatly. I noticed that every form was alike constituted—no face had even the semblance of a smile, or aught of lightheartedness,—all seemed impressed with some mighty purpose, their minds with serious meditations. Although the light was most brilliant, and, to ordinary mortals, the heat would have been

intense, still a chill as of ice, struck through my frame, and as the shadowy troops moved the air with their progress—a feeling as of a winter wind, made me draw my garments closer around me.

I marvelled greatly, to see men and women who had been intimates and friends in life, now pass each other coldly: others, who had been received and looked up to as men and women of no ordinary mould, were now looked down upon and spurned: enemies, and those estranged, were now reconciled—in many cases, I was told afterwards, because they could not find out here the subject of their quarrels, so less than nothing had they been. Some forms, I noticed, selecting the most shaded passages, with averted heads: these, I learnt, had slandered their neighbours with false accusations, and now feared the accused. Nearing the Altar, I noticed that the countenances of those I saw there grew less downcast. Many of these were of the poor, some of them the very poor. Here, their poverty had ceased to trouble them: their rags and tatters, seemed to have changed in my eyes to beauteous vestments, although they still bore the aspect they had in life. Cripples, too, who in life I had often pitied, here seemed to have been endowed with a wondrous grace and beauty—the faulty member was still there, but I could not have termed them cripples, so changed had they become. An old familiar face came before me: a voice well known to me broke the silence! A poor boy had had an ailing

mother, bed-ridden and helpless for several years. He had worked with all his energy to support her sinking frame. What little he obtained, he gave to her, starving himself, but telling her he lived well and sumptuously. She believed the harmless deception, recovered slowly, and was received into the workhouse. His work done, his frame exhausted, he fell asleep in Jesus. No cross marked his burial-place, no memoir vaunted his worth. One of Christ's mighty nameless heroes, he feared not to cross the river of death, and put off the changing garments of mortality, for the unchanging robes of immortality.

A feeling of awe came upon me, far greater than had ever seized my spirits before any of the great of the earth, and I bowed myself at his feet. Gently his voice came to me as the sound of rippling water.

Mortal, bow not before me, I am but a poor boy, saved by Christ, taken home before he had reached the full stature of manhood. So, so unworthy, with nothing of my own to recommend me: but filthy rags to cover my form, and ignorance to fill my mind, for I never received any education. I was only taught never to miss my prayers, and never to steal: but, you know, mother was ignorant too, at least everyone said so. Perhaps if we had been educated, we should have loved God less,—thought more of ourselves, less of Him: have loved our life on earth, and missed the life of Heaven. All is so happy here, I wish

mother could come. She told me always to say

"Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed,"

and although I had no bed to dread, still I never feared to die. It was very wicked of me I know, but I could not help praying to die, and now I only want her to come too, and I shall have all I have ever wished for.

My head sank upon my breast, and bitter thoughts struck home. This Saint had lived within a few yards of my comfortable residence. I had wanted for nothing, he had starved—and died—to live for ever! I shall die, too, some day, for—for what? My limbs quivered beneath me, and I sank upon the ground!

CHAPTER II.

THE clock striking the hour awoke me from my reverie—still the same scene, the unwearied passage of Spirits, the shining effulgence of light! High aloft, above the high Altar, two motionless angels hold the chosen vessels of Sacramental grace, whilst above, below, around, the wondering Spirits bend in adoration; pictures of Saints seemed to lose their painted fixedness, and relapse into being. The very windows, mocked me into the belief that the Saints they pictured, the holy scenes they depicted, were scenes and beings of life, having lost their fixity. I slowly passed down the aisle, away from the altar, where I seemed to be treading on ground too holy, in company too pure, for mortals, for I noticed the brightness of face paled and faded away, the farther away I was from it.

A statesman of noble mien, and who had but quite recently been taken from his eminent station on earth, at the very zenith of his

power, drew near with bended head and faltering step. When near to me, raising his head, he said, fixing his piercing, glassy glance upon me:

Art thou from the world in life?

I am.

Knowest thou how fares it with the one good action of my life?

How is it possible, Spirit? You, in life, must have given thousands: how know I then to which you refer?

Mortal, I forgot. Good actions, are in the world, estimated by metal, and number of pieces. Follow me.

Tremblingly I followed him, knowing not whither I went.

Under the transept appeared two mighty tablets, upon the head of which were inscribed, on the one "Heaven," on the other, "Earth!"

Stay thy footsteps, said the Spirit.

Then I saw him gaze at the stones, upon which appeared, dimly at first, afterwards most vividly; the letters on the tablet headed "Heaven," being, as it were, in gold: and those on the other tablet, being of a deep black. I followed his eyes, and read that which was contained in them. The one named "Heaven" bore upon its surface but few entries, and those dated many years ago, when the Spirit by my side had been a child.

Here you read the record of my life, said the Spirit: "there" you read the record of my death: first pointing to the tablet "Heaven," then to the other, "Earth."

I read, at first frequently, (but less and less frequently as the dates were more recent) of prayers, more or less earnest, of little kindnesses rendered, of genial human sympathies, of love to Christ, of obedience to parents. I read also, of prayers by parents, and of love fairly earned, from them and others, by thoughtfulness and care. The records grew less frequent, until I came to early manhood: the contest seemed to grow more difficult, the victories won less and less frequent. A record of a great victory, by prayer and repentance, over self—its fruits recorded also: a suicide had been rescued, and gently, but firmly, urged to lead a better life, apart from temptation: this also, had several prayers offered up for it, and the life had been saved through their instrumentality. A few more entries of prayers, less and less frequent, and soon they ceased altogether: a few ejaculations, and frequent thoughts of remorse, were all that were left, and the record ended. I turned to the other: what a vast sheet! crowded with facts, brilliant speeches, vanity, pride, worldly pomp, adulation, envy, and selfishness! Here were recorded noble acts; but all destroyed, because of their wanting the accessories of noble intents and earnest prayer.

A memorial, signed by thousands, in gratitude for the distinguished man's influence in the cause of virtue and sobriety, through the introduction of a measure to check open immorality, here failed in its effect, and was

destroyed by the fact, that the distinguished man lived in immorality himself! A similar measure to put down theft, was rendered futile for good by the assistance given to large business frauds; and the ruin of thousands, by the promotion of bubble companies, in which the thousands had read his name, and rested their trust upon it. I also noticed, that not only did evil motives cancel the good act itself, but more flagrant hypocrisy not only destroyed its outer coat of seeming goodness, but deducted largely from the good that had gone before. Thus, the presiding at a meeting, with prayer, for the reformation of fallen women at a time when he had discarded his former mistress, turning her adrift without house or home merely to renew his *liason* with another, had almost destroyed the whole of the little good in his life! I turned away sickened, and sickening, with loathing from him.

You turn away, but with no feelings of pity, said the Spirit, with subdued voice.

How can I have pity? Has not your life been one of open revolt against God?

Stay! remember that you also have a page —one of "Earth," if you have also one of "Heaven."

And is the Record open to my eyes? Oh, God, it cannot contain such dread truths as I have just witnessed! Mercy, oh mercy, if it is not yet too late!

"Remember" that you are yet in life. Your record is not yet closed. Your page

of "Earth" may not contain my sins and failings, but it fails not to contain others, less, perhaps, even more heinous. To you, the page is not yet open,—only to those who have passed the border land. Your time will soon come: see you to it, that you make ready for its coming. The being I worshipped in life was Self: from boyhood its canker was eating into my life: in manhood, it bore its fruit, and I fell away, deeper and deeper! A crisis came—the crisis which comes to every-one sometime or other in their life—in which I had the alternative of two roads, good or evil. For a time I chose the good, as my Record shows. It was then that I felt, a desire to transmit to others the love of Christ I felt myself. I trusted too much in my own strength, and, as such who trust, I fell—fell deeper and deeper until death! I legislated for others and failed to legislate for myself while it was within my power: my legislations are now enforced on earth, whilst I—wander—lost—knowing that for me all legislation is past! Too late! too late!—his voice, faltering towards the end, when it uttered the words "too late," reached a higher note, and with it his form seemed convulsed with a mighty throe as he passed away from me, and I saw him no more.

All time, and all degree, were represented in this ghostly company. Stately forms of the dead, from ages, that I knew not, except as history, were there: stalwart men and fair women, whose names were mingled with

their Country's, helping to build its fair name by their lives and deeds. I feared to know more, and yet the dread recitals had an interest and a lesson, passing the petty interests and lessons of earth. On earth, I had seen and heard, what they seemed: here, I saw them stripped of their self-consciousness and deceit. What need, I thought, for tragedy and the stage, when every man is a living tragedian, acting his part to the world? What need, our seeming to be others than we are, when in personating ourselves, we are not real beings, but performing our parts, to please and to deceive.

Full of these thoughts, I passed along: before me, on a side wall, was a board I had often read before, "Bequests and Donations" was its heading. It contained a list of bequests to the Cathedral Chapter, and the poor of the City. But what a transformation! "Charles Waller, Esq., citizen, some time mayor of this city, the sum of £1,000." That is as of old: but this is unknown to me— "Forfeited, in compensation of a daily robbery for thirty years, by false weights and measures, whilst following the trade of a milk and butter dealer." Again: Robert Clowes, gentleman, also for some time mayor of this city, the sum of £1,500, "A portion of £10,000 left in ward for a niece, who never received any portion of it, and who subsisted on the supposed charity of her uncle, most grudgingly bestowed." And these men, we had revered, and thought endowed with noble hearts, generosity,

—now fatally explained. Here are some insertions, which have not been inserted previously, on the blank spaces left upon the board: "Sarah Whiteman, an aged spinster, of her poverty, 1s. and many prayers." "John Mason, 15s. money received in return for sheltering a poor outcast, stricken down with fever, for the space of more than two months." A many others of a like nature. My heart felt lightened, with the thought that the God-like side of our nature had not yet been quite crushed out, as previous evidences had tended to make me believe.

I passed on, looking at the old familiar tombstones.

In these also the commentary had not been omitted.

A tablet, stating the death of Ann Morgan, the lamented wife of George Morgan, tradesman of this City, also explained, in hideous contrast, that her death had been hastened by his cruelty, and that ere she was cold in her grave, he had married her successor, with whom he had made the compact previous to her death.

A handsome and expensively finished monument, "Sacred to the Memory of Sir P. Trevannion, Bart.," &c., erected by his disconsolate widow, and nine fatherless children, also set forth, that the disconsolate widow had anticipated nearly all his property to meet her extravagant debts, and had early anticipations of being consoled by a consolatory widower: and that of the children, two of the sons had

hastened his death, by his unavailing efforts to redeem them, from a vicious and immoral life: of the others, one had expressed his satisfaction at, "the old governor having gone," two of the daughters, "thought black became them better than anything," and that it was very convenient this sad event had happened just now, when they were likely to be proposed to by M. C. and W. E., who would thus have the opportunity of witnessing their heightened charms. Only four out of the nine, sincerely lamented their father, and these so young, that, of course, as the world would term it, "such weakness as sympathy was excusable." Few with monuments, seemed to leave much regret behind them, few seemed to be worthy of the fulsome adulation bestowed upon them. A modest stone let in at the base of the wall with only the initials B. M. S. upon it, and which the guide to the Cathedral referred to as the supposed tomb of a well-known dishonest man and public swindler, who had been buried, through interest in the Cathedral, and who, it was supposed, only dare thus modestly to note its site (quite an error on the part of the chronicler, for I found his stone, a handsome marble tablet, in a very conspicuous spot afterwards, only, out of fear of its destruction by public indignation, it had been covered up). The tomb B. M. S. stated its owner to have been, a Godly and pious man, who for the greater portion of his life, worshipped God

sincerely in this Cathedral, in life most generous—he lived, denying self, and devoting himself to the sick and suffering, until God called him hence, to live with Him for ever.

Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

CHAPTER III.

MY steps were hastily retraced, as I heard the beautiful chime of the bells ringing out, as it were, for the service of the morrow, Christmas Day; but looking out of a side window I saw that morn had not yet given token of its presence, so, with wonder, I hastened to the nave. What glorious music the bells rang out! It seemed to me that a hundred peals were mingling their joyous melody, with Angel ringers to attune each harmonious note into one grand melody of chaos, and yet of perfect harmony. Not distinct notes only, as tolled by weary ringers paid for their work, and stimulated with some of earth's decoctions, but one unbroken chime of—as it were—untiring praise and holy thankfulness. Methinks, too, that in their chime I could detect heavenly summonses to serve the Lord, earnest petitions to wandering sinners, calls for erring lambs of the fold, loving Saviour's words; the melody

takes a sadder strain—they seem in gentle entreaty with subdued voices, to whisper, "Why *will* ye stray? The Home is ready, the Shepherd welcomes; Come, Come, Come. Home for the weary; Rest for the wanderer; Peace for the troubled one; Home, Home, Home." But a change comes over their strain, and wilder and wilder ring they out their message to the world, with jubilant voice and musically-clamorous tongue. Christ is Born. Unto us a Son is given, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! King of Heaven, Born in Humility, Saviour and Lord of all—Holy, Holy, Holy!

My senses seemed dulled and bewildered by their heavenly music, and I felt that they had their message to deliver, that they who thus chimed were ministers of God in their vocation, and before my eyes in revolting remembrance passed the scenes which I knew were perpetrated in that same belfry by man. No wonder the bells were dispirited in their message when used by such sacrilegious hands, and mingled with, and deadening their melody, were some of the vile words of earth, uttered close to their echoing mouths. The bells have ceased, but they leave a fit successor.

The organ, played by no mortal fingers, raises its wild chant in unity with a myriad voices in one mighty burst of thanksgiving, and the melodious strains re-echo from roof to roof, as if too small, too insignificant to retain their fulness. Christ is Born!

Now I listened, and mingling with the

mighty shout, I heard thanksgivings innumerable, praises numberless, and hearts eloquent unto their God; yet no voice as of creature—all ascended in the one cry, resulting from but coalescing with its cause, one speechless worship rendered unto their God, its cause and end, "Christ is Born!"

Clad in white raiment, a mighty throng moves onward in procession unto the altar, whilst around, above, below, myriads bend the knee in prayer. Standing or kneeling, all worshipped untiringly; no seats were needed, cushions ignored; all indolence, and mind-wandering, was forgotten. Arrayed in white garments, no thought of their appearance dulled their petitions, no word or whisper to other, they felt the presence of the Mighty One, and fell down and worshipped It. High upon the altar towered the Sacred "Crucifix." Before it, as the Sacred Symbol of their salvation, every eye and form was prostrate. I saw the "Spirit," who, on earth, had held office as Bishop, gazing with dimmed and longing eyes towards it. In life he had condemned its use as a means of devotion. I, too, had called it "idolatrous," yet here I felt it not, knew it not. A symbol of things unseen, yet hoped for, on earth; it was here, still the same, heralding the consummation of all things. I stayed not to question its legality, but, filled by it with its sacred memories, I knelt in meditation. How despicable to me now seemed the arguments I had used against it. I had inhibited my curate for bowing at the

name of "Jesus." Who was I, to arrogate to myself the curtailment of the honour due unto His Sacred name? I tried to recall my reasons, to remember my arguments—I could not. Here they could not return to me; they were of earth, earthy. Angels were ministering at the Sacred Mysteries, the silence of awe stilled every voice, not a breath disturbed the Sacred Office.

No form of words was heard, the same ceremony, but hallowed with sanctity, made glorious by its freedom from defect, by its sacred silence, one thought and feeling united all; in unison were heart, mind, tongue—Holiness unto the Lord.

Stealing upon the ear, came at last a subdued strain, rising in volumes of sound, until all voices were mingled. It spoke of sorrows healed, and pains removed; of tears wiped away for ever, of love unspeakable; of joy, peace, and thanksgiving; the strain was one—"Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Grant us Thy peace." I felt as if I, too, could sing thus for ever, if but my voice were attuned to the everlasting song. I knew then of the City whose Builder is God, wherein is no darkness, and no sorrow; where the streets are as pure gold, and the habitations as crystal, whose inhabitants cease not day or night, singing "Holy, Holy, Holy." Angels with censers, swung on high clouds of incense, ascending on high with the prayers of the adoring multitude.

The bell's solemn toll conveys to all without

the solemn act of Consecration, the very angels veil their faces and fall in adoration. All sense of being leaves me. Mortal, bereft of that which is mortality, I worship as a Spirit before the Throne!

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Morn breaks. Impelled aloft, helpless and consciousless, I am conveyed along, borne by unseen hands swiftly, and without motion on my part. Again the bells ring out—not the whole peal, but two solitary bells, which, however, bear low and sweet music over hill and dale, summoning to "Communion." Long years had passed away, and no such service had been offered, as the first fruits to God upon His Holy Day, as the early seeking of Him, which He loveth. Priests had excused themselves by saying that "of value in years gone by, it had ceased to be so now," when at the time the world was growing more and more evil, the times waxing nearer and nearer the coming of the Son of Man. At last, one priest, zealous for his Master, with a heart full of love for Him, had undertaken it solely by himself. He was told the bells disturbed the sleepers; only two low-toned ones must therefore be used. He answered that bells were no necessity—"Souls needed The Presence," they came not for accessories.

No organ, no white-robed choristers, no crowded congregation—a gathering together of a few earnest, loving hearts, such as their Master loveth. The murmuring prayers sounded as sweet music ascending unto us,

the low tones were mingled with blessings, and became mighty voices. Here was "pelf" forgotten—all were before The Presence, and became—equal; all sought the same precious benefit—regeneration; all alike received a blessing, and became "temples of the Holy Ghost." A man clad in fine raiment led up to the altar, a man, poor in this world's goods, and bereft of vision. Divine pity was here expressed in the lives of humanity, here were souls clothed in the garments of righteousness. Faltering footsteps in the highway of life were here strengthened and sanctified. Half-formed resolutions for good, prayers for reformation, here became rules for life. Not a few had the mark of "The Lamb" on their foreheads, others were striving hard to obtain it; all, for the time, were bereft of things earthly, and had a fore-knowledge of the Communion of Heaven.

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Again the bells ring out loudly—the full peal, but the music is not the same. It is now advanced morning, and crowds are wending their way to service. I am carried away within the porch of the Cathedral, from whence the voices of those entering are quite audible. I seem to have lost my being, and to be a Spirit amongst Spirits, for my individuality is lost, and although gazed at, or the space in which I am, no sign of recognition or alarm is expressed. "We listen." Approaching are two gentlemen,

one an intimate friend, the other well known to me.

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We shall be bored this morning by one of old Matthews' sermons; I hear he is in residence.

Well, for myself, I always like Canon Matthews, answered my friend. Of all the Canons, he preaches the shortest sermons, and, I must say, very much to the point.

Why, you rascal! you sleep through them, so you can't be much of a judge.

Which remark seemed to tickle the fancy of them both, and with the laugh upon their lips, they entered—the House of God!

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My love! I assure you the one thing I admire in Mr. Matthews, is, that his discourses omit all topics upon which there is any degree of doubt, such as Baptism, Confirmation, and, I may say, all the so-called Sacraments. Besides, his arguments are of so peaceful a nature, he never harrows up the feelings, advises us to live in the station in which we are placed with complacency and ease, shutting our eyes to the sins and iniquities of all around us.

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I here made an effort to contradict these base libels and contortions, but found my voice speechless, my presence not possible to be made manifest.

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Matilda, my dear, how dare you walk to

church with that low, ill-bred man, William Yorke.

He is neither low nor ill-bred, mamma.

He has not a penny.

He is none the worse for that, mamma; when shall we estimate people rightly?

I heard of his taking up with some low "Ragged-Schools," and actually assisting to his home, a drunken man, he met late one night in the streets.

Yes, mamma, but you forget the boys were treating him most cruelly.

No I do not. Why did he not call for the police?

But he could not, mamma, for he was quite unconscious. Besides, none were near, or William wouldhave called them.

I don't care; it was no concern of his. The man shouldn't get intoxicated. But I insist upon your not speaking to him again.

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Father, follow me, said a girl of about twelve years of age, leading a man cleanly, but plainly dressed.

But, lassie, this is no place for such as we; all folks here's fine dressed, and gentlefolks.

Yes, it is, father. I know a corner where we can sit, away from the beadle, and I love to come here; and you will, too, father, when it isn't new to you, as it is to-day.

God bless thee, lassie. Three-and-twenty year to-day since I went to Church, and now my little girl's a bringing of me!

You must kneel down, father, and say what I told you out of my book.

Lord! to think the old 'ooman died afore seeing us two here, said the man, brushing away a tear.

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Papa, I want you.

Well, Charlie?

Why do people dress up to go to church?

I don't know, Charlie, unless it is to appear in their best before God in His house.

But wasn't God very poor?

Hush, Charlie—yes, when on earth.

Then He wouldn't love rich people.

Yes, my boy, He loved all.

But Old Crowe says he doesn't love rich people, because they let him starve; and, you know, Old Crowe's very poor, too.

The child-like voice again broke the silence.

Papa! How is it God shuts His house up all the week?

God doesn't shut it up, my boy; man both shuts it up, and opens it.

But why isn't it open all the week? I don't mean this big Church, but all Churches. I know why this Church is open all through the week: Mary, the housemaid told me, because the beadles had to get their living out of it, by showing the building.

No, Charlie, that was wrong; Mary should not tell you such tales. The reason why all Churches are not open every day is, that some clergymen do not think it necessary; and again, they have so much else to attend to.

Is it necessary to play "croquet," papa?

No, my child, except as pastime.

Well, papa, I heard of two clergymen being called "the best players of croquet anywhere," and, you know, Mr. Wilson, the clergyman, plays on our lawn for whole days together, with Katey and Lottie.

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I can only tell you, John, that if you persist in your determination to enter the Church, you are a bigger fool than I took you for.

But, father, surely in these matters, one does not estimate, first one's pockets.

Don't act blindly! The prestige of a clergyman is not what it was in my time. Deacons are admitted now to ordination from Theological Colleges.

But you do not give them the credit of their motives being as good as those graduates, who hail from some University?

My dear boy, I do not doubt their motives; I only question their prestige.

I care less for the prestige, even, than I do for "the Church viewed as a speculation."

But, my dear John, you do put such dreadful constructions on things! I did not call it a speculation. Then, again, you will want to marry, and if you don't get help from me you'll starve.

No, father, you mistake me. If I enter the Church, I enter as an unfettered priest. No qualms of conscience shall seize me that my wife is being dressed, however fine or however lowly, upon the Church's patrimony

—my children depending for bread upon the alms of "the faithful."

But, John, we must look at these things from a common sense point of view; in fact, from the world, not from the sky.

I look upon it as, I believe, from God's estimation of them. Remember the passage, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the Sacrifice? and they who wait at the Altar are partakers with the Altar? Even so hath the Lord also ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." (1 Corinthians, ix.) I believe, that neither in that, nor anywhere else, you will find any mention of a wife or children also being included as to be "supported by the Altar."

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CHAPTER IV.

I WAS carried within, and ascended, as before, amongst the Angels and Spirits, who thronged the roof, unseen by the crowded congregation below. I recognised our usual congregation at the Morning Service. The buzz of conversation was distinctly heard, although nothing could be distinguished; yet I am wrong, for from a man bowed in prayer, whose form was an object of remark to several, surprised at such a remarkable phenomenon as a man kneeling in prayer, where not actually enjoined by the Liturgy, arose a fervent petition for mercy. "My God, my God, have pity upon me; I have deserted Thine Altar from boyhood, I have neglected Thine ordinances, scoffed at Thy holy religion, but now I am stricken; Thou hast at last broken my heart—bind and heal it; Thou hast taken from me my child whom I have idolised, my wife, whom I have loved with my life, and now, I have Thee alone for refuge, come unto

me, and stay with me, I beseech Thee; let Thy light beam upon my path, and take away from me my desolation and misery."

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An Angel bending over me said in gentle tones, Mortal, it is given to you, and such as you, to bear the King's message to such as he. In what manner do you deliver it? He needs not disquisitions—homilies for him are futile; he needs the earnest entreaty and loving guidance of an unworldly spirit; one who, in his soul, sups daily of his Father's grace, and thinks his life too short, to pass it in that Father's courts fulfilling His ministry. I answered not, knowing that in silence I alone could find refuge from the crying claims of my neglect, and unfitness for such a guidance.

I looked below—many lips were moving, but no sound ascended from them. In the least public places of the sanctuary were some from whose hearts ascended heartfelt prayers, others prayed earnestly for a time, but afterwards suffered their attention to wander when their moving lips gave forth no sound, for I noticed that all sincerity, however brief, and however low it was whispered, even if the lips moved not, ascended distinctly as in a loud voice unto us, and was recorded in the tablets I had before seen.

Amongst the prayers I heard the childlike voice of little Charlie.

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"Please bless papa and mamma, and little

Charlie, and make him a good boy. He never wants to tell any more stories, for papa says all little boys who tell stories never go to Heaven, and he wants to come there. Let us all come, for Jesus Christ's sake." Surely golden keys to unlock the heavenly gates.

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And from a corner—the corner where freedom from beadles was promised to him by his daughter, came the following prayer from the father:—

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"Oh, Lord, I am a poor ignorant man, and don't know how to pray, but my girl is a good girl, and I pray you to bless her, and to bless me too, if such as me can be blessed. I work for her with all my might, and am thankful that we want for nought; but, O Lord, take care on her when I'm gone, and be a Father to her, for there be some as calls themselves men who'll take advantage of the poor with their money, and lead 'em wrong, when the only t'other thing they've got to do is to starve. If she can't do no other without that, let her starve, Lord, and come up to me, where you've promised to bring those who'll pray to Thee when they die.

. . . . . .

The prayers of those whose lips moved only, I heard not; they may have deemed it a beneficial pastime, but it was a useless one, except to their own condemnation, for I observed that the time thus spent was entered in Earth's tablet as so much desecration in

God's edifice. I felt impelled to cry unto them, to shout them an alarm, that they were hastening to the precipice blindfold, from which they must be recalled, at any hazard, at any cost. I implored the Angel to make my voice heard, to leave me space, if but for a few minutes, to sound them such a summons as should waken their dead hearts with fears for their safety.

He said, sadly and gently—I cannot; my mission is given to me—this belongs not to it. To you have been given golden opportunities for such a purpose; even this very morn, you will minister unto them—in what manner, judge for thyself.

I stretched forth mine hands, with such yearnings as had never before been known to me in my ministry, my head felt fevered with a sense of the awful responsibility which I had borne.

All now rose from their knees, and their voices joined in a well-known hymn upon the Nativity. I observed that a much larger proportion of earnestness was manifested in the singing than in the prayers, a greater incentive probably being offered to devotion through it as a medium, although I noticed with pain, that the increase was of a more transitory nature; still, although it had this drawback, it was cheering to note, as a means of reaching the hearts of the vast number of indifferent worshippers. I observed throughout the service that in the portions endowed with most life, the Angels had most to record

in the tablet called "Heaven"—even the poorest seeming to have their feelings raised in the ascriptions of praise. I marked with most intense joy the much louder swell in this Hymn, approaching, in some minor sense, to the harmony of the Spirit-choirs, although mingled with the faltering notes and want of the intense feeling manifested in that mighty sound. I looked with eager interest to see and hear what followed, hoping that some strong influence might impress this precious seed deeper into the ground of their hearts. Why should my spirits falter, my expectations be blunted, by seeing myself, in life, or my semblance of it, ascend the pulpit? Surely it was not fear! No, it was not fear. The awful scenes through which I had passed—the awful company in which I even then was—made no fresh change any alarm, no transformation impossible! I could not deceive myself. I felt that, for the work before me, I was unfitted; that indifference before me would remain indifference still. Shamefaced, I hid my face, as I listened to a short historical research into the statistical numbers of the men destroyed, on either side, in the battles between the Philistines and the Israelites, and in which, I laboured to create fancied discrepancies in the received version of the account contained in the Old Testament. This concluded, the congregation rose to disperse. My intense consciousness of what my companions must think of me, and infinitely more than this, of what God must think

of me, mingled with the desire never more to presume to teach that which I had not myself first learned, kept me silent, and I was left alone. No need of words of condemnation, —my conscience, my ears, were mine accusers; abased and humiliated, I would have taken the humblest station, have retired anywhere, to be alone, to make known my contrition unto God.

Mortal, to thee has been unfolded, by the omnipotent wisdom of Heaven, the fulfilment of thy vows, as a priest of God, as they appear unto Him that judgest the hearts and actions of men whether they be of God. Wilt thine bear the scrutiny? Hast thou not challenged the very basis of the throne of the Most High, by thy doubts, without foundation, and yet callest thyself—a priest of the Eternal God? Fit custodian of the keys of Heaven, verily! Wouldest thou be answered in thy frailties by annihilation? Speak—art thou ready to meet thy God? Canst thou render up an account of thy priesthood unto Him who is an High Priest for ever? Speak.

Spirit, my life has been revealed unto me. I answer nothing. Extenuation I plead not; I only pray for life—implore for a little time before I go hence for ever, that I may plead for mercy, call aloud for pardon.

Mercy, is extended, even to you! By all the laws of Heaven and earth, thou hast forfeited thy stewardship; yet, it remains unto you. Thou hast incurred the wrath of Heaven; yet, unto thee is yet given time.

Thou has trifled with the opportunities of grace, which have been given to thee for others. Thine own are still thine own. Forget not that thou art a brand plucked from the burning. Follow me.

The Angel checked his flight again over the doorway, and I was conveyed by his side, dreading to hear more of my condemnation.

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What a strange sermon this morning by the Canon, said an old lady, walking past with her daughter.

Yes, mamma; but you know, Canon Matthews, is said to be a Broad Churchman.

What do they mean by Broad Churchman? Such names were never heard of when I was a girl. Then, a Churchman was a Churchman simply—neither Broad, Low, or High!

They mean by Broad, his tendencies to doubt received belief.

But if he doubts, why does he receive the Church's pay, and yet undermine her doctrines?

That I can't say, mamma; you must refer to Canon Matthews for a solution of that question.

I've heard of High and Low before, but never of Broad. What is the point of difference between High and Low?

The High say they differ from the Low, merely in question of degree. The Low say they differ from the High because, as you may say, at their "height" they border on Romanism.

But what of the law of the Church?

The law of the Church is made secondary by the State, to the law of equity, so that questions of doctrine are determined by laymen—this satisfies neither party.

But how is that? If my house is robbed I suppose I must not send to the Bishop?

Oh, no mamma; but you see the Church has let itself get subservient to the State.

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What was he driving at? I tell you the man must have meant something.

Yes, Sam, he meant as how as that account was wrong, about the men, you know.

Well, but if the number's wrong, how is it we're to know whether the whole tale ain't a make up?

But he didn't say so, and if as how that's wrong, it doesn't say as all's wrong.

But, I tell you, if he ses as how that's wrong and he's right, who does he think will go and believe all as Gospel truth that he ses of the tother portion on it? Why, its nothing but whims and fancies.

Well, Sam, you know he knows better than you or I.

Better nor me, but not better nor my old mother; for she knew it right off by heart, nearly every word on it; and ses she, Sam, ses she, believe I never cared for you, believe I stole every bit of food I put in your mouth, but never believe nought agin your Bible, and I'm blest if I do, so help me die if I do.

But he only tells you that the figures are wrong, and who's to know about figures?

That's just it. It's just like a man getting at the back of an hedge to shoot at yer in the back as ye pass. I ses "all or nothin'." Who does he think, with only one idea at a time in their 'eds, can follow him through his dirty little ways?

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No, Elizabeth, decidedly not. I have entered Church for the last time. I attend St. Saviour's, and am informed that I must attend the clergy in the vestry before I attend Communion again, because of the notorious scandal (only that little affair of Smith's, you are aware Elizabeth) which had been created by my conduct in the parish. I informed them, (with mild benignity, restraining my indignation within Christian limits) "Decidedly not, sir's: decidedly not. If I want a Christening, a Marriage, or a Burial (for which, you are aware, they follow the admirable rule of omitting the usual fees) I will avail myself of your offices, but your advice I do not solicit."

Really, Abraham, I think you are too hard upon the Rector. He said it in the most gentlemanly way, and said it was advisable for your own character's sake.

All to no purpose, Elizabeth. Again I am assailed. Numbers smashed this Sunday. Deuteronomy escaped with a severe wound the Sunday before last, an anticipated attack during the week upon the first chapter of

Genesis. I have only one refuge. The New United Primitive Methodists have long looked towards me; as a deacon I could look with scorn upon these Rectors and Curates! As a local preacher my talents are well known—I mean would develope!

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Ah, friend Monro! said an old gentleman, shaking hands with an aged clergyman.

Age tells upon me you see, friend, yet I repine not. God is good: He still permits me to get out to Church.

Don't you think with such sermons as we heard this morning it is as well to stay at home—nay, even better?

No, no: remember, friend, it is God's house—it is His service we attend; yes, attend most thankfully. Poor Matthews! I knew him as a little boy, when his mother said to me, Doctor, I have one for the Church, you see, I always longed to have a son a clergyman; and now he is fast going astray, poor, poor fellow.

But I can't see he merits pity so much as the congregation; see the harm he does.

Yes, but others are not necessarily influenced; they have the Prayers, and believe in them; they have the Sacraments, and live in them. But Matthews—poor Matthews! has nothing! Then his punishment, not only a life's work thrown away; but what defence can be made—what excuse offered? Educated, he cannot plead ignorance: ordained, he cannot escape responsibility. A priest killing

himself with his own weapons! I cannot conceive a more pitiable spectacle! You cannot, then, ask me why I pity him more than the congregation.

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That clergyman, until his death, afterwards became my teacher. How I revelled in his pity! I, the proud scholar, how I hung upon his simple words! I noticed coming towards us, the young man intended for the Church; who I afterwards pleaded to train in his studies, although declining to train him for his sacred office. Others may by this time know my reason.

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Now, that is a repetition of what I was arguing before we entered Church, father. That man has entirely mistaken his vocation.

I cannot agree with you, John. Every man's mind is not constituted alike, and I can tell you in the Church we want variety.

How do you explain the passage in Revelations, then—"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this Book." Here, to me, is the issue—Is God a

faithful teacher, or is Canon Matthews? One or the other,—both it cannot be. Canon Matthews states facts of the Bible to be erroneous. God states, under the penalty of an awful curse, that he who taketh away or addeth unto is alike cursed, neither more nor less. Not one Book inspired and the others uninspired, but all inspired.

But how explain the Canon's facts? Two and two make four, don't they?

Certainly; but remember that, in the first place, to state one argument, the Bible has been translated and re-translated again and again; differences of language cause difficulties in that translation. That meanings have been wrongly expressed is a fact well known. How much more easy to omit or to add a numeral, quite by error and unintentionally; such mistakes are of daily occurrence with printers. It cannot be otherwise. The arguments for such trifling errors being taken as contradictory of inspiration, I consider as futile as they are childish. Then, of such doubters none should prove themselves cowards and deserters. All should do it conscientiously; how, then, can priests extenuate a living, flagrant lie to the vows of their priesthood by remaining in their offices as priests?

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Again the Spirit uttered the words "Follow me," and again we glided aloft, but not to remain; away into space, swiftly and

silently, I was borne in the wake of the Angel, whose retinue consisted of countless Spirits, above, below, around; encircled, I lay unconscious of everything except my past, gone for ever!

CHAPTER V.

I WAS awoke from my reverie of wretchedness, by the Angel's taking me into a house of a superior class; how, I cared not to enquire. To me the power seemed to be given, when in the Spirit's company, of seeing yet not being seen; of entering anywhere in spite of doors, windows, or any other obstacles. The purpose with which we had entered here, I knew not,—that, Time or the Angel alone could unfold. Stretched upon a couch, with dishevelled hair and disordered dress, and head hanging over its side, was a man in the prime of life, whose surroundings and dress bespoke the position of a gentleman, although he was not one at the present moment, because he had surrendered brain, morality, position, self-respect, and Godliness to one vile influence—"Drink," and now, under its fatal power, he lay as one dead. The room bore witness of the mad riot which had been carried on the previous night. The remains of

a sumptuous meal remained upon the tables, broken wine glasses lay about, wine stains upon the snowy table-cloths, chairs overturned, the very flowers seemed to droop their innocent heads with shame to be in such company. A fair-haired youth lay upon the floor alike unconscious. The first faint beams of dawn stole through the curtains, and mumbling to himself intelligibly, the man upon the couch slowly rose, and rubbed his bleared eyes. With eyes, from which the pure light of vision had almost departed, he surveyed the scene, and rising with faltering steps and trembling hands he poured himself out some soda-water, which stood near, and by its influence a little sober realisation of the scene came upon him. His ears caught a murmuring sound as of the rambling thoughts of the dreamer. He listened, and observed they proceeded from the lips of the fair-haired youth, upon whose face the first dawnings of manhood had left their imprint.

"Ah, Elly, Elly, don't send me away from you—don't Elly, have pity on me; you have my future in your hands; you'll be the making of me, Elly. What, no! You can't mean no. You don't know how I need you. I am getting into bad company; you can save me from it if you will. I know I'm poor, but I will work—work! Yes, work until I'm dead for you, Elly. No? Yet tell me how I can win you. Save me from myself. I have been led away, but I will reform. If you will become my wife, my love, I will leave the

past for ever. Oh, Heaven you refuse! You believe me not! Mercy! Don't leave me to myself—to those who have made me what I am.

His words faltered, and ended with a sudden cry, which cry awoke him.

You seem to have been troubled with a bad dream, Georgy, said the man.

The youth gazed vacantly around him, then slowly raised himself, saying—I had fancied myself far away from this hell.

Yes, with Elly! said the man, sneeringly, although the broken utterances seemed to have disturbed him strangely, a feeling which was, however, soon driven from his face. You're complimentary, I must say.

Complimentary! hissed the youth. Yes, I owe you thanks for—ruin. My life has been accursed, by—you!

That's right, go ahead, said the man. Did I seek you—did I tempt you here? No, no. Such tales as that will not do. But since you can't be polite, go; I say, go.

Go where? To destruction? For your guidance—your influence has no other sign-post.

Anywhere, so that you rid me of your presence, or I'll make you feel my influence.

Complete it then, I care not. I reck not. You made my name a polluted one; and from me has passed the hope of happiness. As a hideous vampire you have sucked the very existence from my life, and now you coolly tell me—Go.

The man sprang forward to arrest the

crash of a candelabra seized by the youth, and flung at him with terrific force, and with clenched fist struck him unpitingly to the earth.

Bending over the body he thought he had killed him, and fear took hold of his mind. To this, then, have I come—Murder! Oh, what a life, and all caused by drink! Drunkard! My wife sued for divorce from me, to seek refuge from my violence. Drunkard! my very children, shrank from me with dread, and feared me! Drunkard! my fair-haired child, little Rosy, poor little Rosy, fled before my approach with terror, and fell—crippling herself for life. Drunkard! my soul is lost, my senses are degraded! Worship! I know no worship but the bottle! Drunkard! My hand has struck its last blow, and I am a murderer! A drunkard's death before me; for the scaffold shall receive me not. I hail it! I drink to it! My ruin! Ha, ha! I am mad!

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Filled with horror by the scene I saw not not the Angel pointing with outstretched arm to the gibbering maniac, until his voice broke the silence, only disturbed by the madman's utterance.

This man's soul was under thy guidance as its minister. For seven years minister of this parish, an opportunity was given to you to preach against the vice of drunkenness—to plead in private, to heal the growing evil which has resulted thus—in a family's ruin, a

RETRIBUTION—PASSION ENTHRONED; GOD DETHRONED.

father's destruction, a soul lost! Tell me not that you knew it not—you did; only he was a rich man; he subscribed largely to your charities; you hoped for the best, and did —nothing; once only—you spoke of drunkenness in public! It was to your poor, you feared not to speak to them; the wealthy, this man, you feared to tell his sin. You see the end. Follow me.

. . . . . .

A darkness as of night, a distance which had no measurement, passed beneath our feet, a mighty crowd surrounds a lofty hill; the dress of all, most strange unto me. I knew it not, and yet it seemed familiar. Like unto the pictures in the Bible, it brought to mind scenes long past. The hoarse murmur of a multitude, the mighty swaying to and fro of a host, numberless as the sand upon the sea shore, which no man can number. Upon the eminence two crosses, and, awful sight, two men distended upon them, their hands and feet nailed unto the wood. Between, a cloud most dense, concealing all else. Around the hill, soldiers; the dress, those of ancient Romans; the hill, the scene, the men upon the crosses! The vision is revealed before me, and I see the thieves who died in Crucifixion. A voice, most agonising, breaks upon the ear, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," and as heavenly music comes the answer, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

The scene faded from my sight, and I saw no more.

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Mercy is thus displayed to thee, Mortal, to teach thee, that unto the mercy of God, there is no limit. Truly, a bounteous, overflowing store! Even in death, the limit of a God-like pity, has not denied its pardon. To thee, and to such as thee, it is permitted that you appear to men as the ambassador of your God. Your offers—mercy, peace, a Crown of Life, to live with Him for ever. How often does the language fit the theme, judge ye. Follow me.

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Flaunting along the street, almost deserted of its traffic, and with the hush of falling night o'erspreading it, passes, what was once, a woman. Poor daughters of Eve! sinned against and sinning! Thy lives are dread witnesses to the weakness, even to vice, of man. Where dost thou come from? To where art thou going? What can thy mind consist of, that it can be so deadened to every God-like sense, thus to submit to thy fate, with a sickly, deadly smile upon thy lips?

Boys, youths, men, alike besotted in thy folly; for vice makes all alike. Beware of her that lurkest at the street corners! Thy God commands thee; for her pathway leadeth unto destruction, and the end of those who follow in her steps is—death. Yet scoff not at her, let no unseemly jest pass thy lips, brush not past her, as if thine own life were so pure,

so sinless, that such contamination soiled thee; rather let a gentle "God forgive thee," sink into ears that hear nought else but lies and flatteries, and the very cultivation of all filthinesses. Some e'en think it manly (God forgive, the perversion of a noble word) to insult and taunt them with their fall, to degrade them, if possible, even to a lower depth of infamy. Yet such may have sisters. Mothers they must have had, and reverence for the sex that gave them birth, if nought else, should spare their shame a taunt! Poor wandering souls, degraded ones; to what base use has thy maternity, which gave unto a Saviour birth, and still gives unto the world the existence, for which a God thought it no ignominy to die to save, been prostituted. To thee, O erring daughters,—"Christmas"—that glorious Mother's Festival, has its message, for it brought forgiveness for repentance. Upon the Christmas-day was born He who, writing silently upon the sands when manhood's stature had been reached, without one sin, one impure thought or deed, proclaimed that impurity was condemned, not for ever, if forsaken, that even for the lost of womanhood He had reserved a pardon. To those, too, who have followed in her ways and yet forsake them, before all conscience has been obliterated into guilt, and their manliness into the animalism of sensuality, He also reserves a pardon.

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This is a subject which mortals think too

delicate a one for their fastidious hypocrisies, and yet the very Angels of Heaven weep to see so many led astray, and continue in their sin, without the voice of warning raised to hinder them, or voice of entreaty being exerted to bring the lost lambs back to the fold! How many sisters, in the flesh if not in kin, are there, who will tolerate their presence, in however mean a capacity, in their households, though repentance most sincere may be manifested? Who thrust them out at the first frail sin, when, perhaps, woman's weakness was but a victim to man's guile; homeless, a wanderer, yet the mother's pangs e'en then taking their awful hold upon the helpless one? Who, tempt to infanticide, are, in their acts, nought but murderers, if not in deed, yet in conspiracy? Who, in taking away all hope of reformation, in thrusting to the streets for entire destruction, when the beginning might have been averted into repentance: in leaving to poverty, solitude, absence of care and compassion, and the necessities of a mother, are superior, nay even equal, in compassion to the beasts that perish? and yet these are—Christians! Often mothers themselves! Where departed the compassion that one poor sufferer feels for another in a like position, only bereft of the comforts and even necessities which they enjoy.

Mothers! most forlorn and wretched, live but to repent, and thy God will make thine hardships a penance most acceptable unto Him; thy desertion, a crying plea for His

care, the absence of earthly compassion the greater need for His receiving thee in the Kingdom. Is it habitual to you to preach against such false-named Christian charity, to speak gently to the erring one, to condemn him who has caused the shame, or if his craven heart conceal his personality, to denounce the act? Whether Yes, or No, may be your answer, look to it that ye omit it not in the future, at the peril of thine own salvation. Follow me.

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Far away! Over the housetops swiftly and silently, a river shines like a silver thread in the moonlight, deep beneath out feet. Descending, I note a bridge, familiar by sight unto me; its traffic gone; the pavement, which re-echoed through the day with the ceaseless train of vehicles and the tramp of many feet, now hushed and solemn with its silence; for it was night! Distinctly can now be heard the ripple of the mighty river as it hurries upon its way, concealing its mighty strength under the playful semblance of a child; yet deep, dark, strong, and faithless as the friendships of the world. See how it licks the stony feet of the bridge, as if in its affection; yet it is striving with all its might to loosen the mighty mass and hurl it down in its pride of strength; there, again, a chain, ponderous and strong, fastens a barge to a huge ring embedded immoveably in the stone. Mark how it gently floats the barge, until its chain slackens idly, as if in perfect security,

without any restraint, and yet a rush, a tug of terrific strength (straining the chain to its utmost) marks its semblance of play—merely a mask to try its brute strength more vigorously. O, River! mighty semblance of eternity! Bear lightly, treat tenderly, the frail images of mortality, who, from to time, end their despair of life in thy dim, sullen waters! That which the world has tossed in its tempests, broken upon its rocks, and murdered with its neglect, guide thou gently into thy playful ripples, that, with their music smoothening the pallid brow of death, those who sleep upon thy waters may float to their last bourne, lulled with the music of a tenderness and pity they knew not in life. A woman's form appears upon the parapet; a wild cry breaks upon the night; a spring—a plunge, and a soul less exists in the world—one more gone to its last home! No boat puts off, for none are there to impel them; no passenger upon the bridge; not one has heard the cry, but deems it no business of theirs to inquire into. Nobly does the old river bear up its burden; gently, as a mother with her child, does it cradle it along. See how it is guiding it for the bank with its current, into a little jetty, where the bank gradually sloping, receives its burden, the head gently resting on a sandbank, the limbs yet floating in the water, the frail chance, even for life, thus extended to it, may, at any moment, be broken and the body float again into the stream. But no;

the river has its mission. A higher power directs it, and unmolested on its watery couch, the time passes slowly on. The gentle breeze, freshened by the river, plays its refreshing stream over the pallid face. The breeze revives her, and awaking faintly she sees her peril. A short time ago, reckless of her life, she now clutches the jetty, and with the frenzy of despair, she raises her poor weakened frame up by its aid, until reaching dry earth she sinks down in her exhaustion. Her lips move in prayers, although for a long time strangers to them. "Most merciful and pitying God, I know by this that Thou wishest me to live, and that for me, life, even wretched as it has been, hopeless and shameful, is yet better fitted for me than death. O, God, I thank Thee with all my heart that Thou hast saved me; make me what Thou wouldest; whatever I undergo I will never attempt to take my life again, until Thou thinkest fit to take it to Thyself. I have not known happiness on earth, and I was throwing away my chance of happiness in Heaven. Take it not away from me, my God; leave it still to me, to be obtained at last. All I undergo will only make me thank Thee more and more; toil will be sweetened by the thought that I may come to Thee."

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The world believes that all those who take away the spirit of life which is within them are lost for ever, not only in this world, but the next also, said the Angel mournfully; it

is best so. Thus thousands receive their only check from destroying the image which God hast made, to escape from their own most wretched state; it was God's wise precaution against his silence being mistaken as a sanction for despair, from which, the sole refuge opening out its gaunt invitation would be death—death unnatural, and by self-annihilation. But even to the suicide, from causes which time deepens into a deeper iniquity, from which a soul flees, hoping for pardon! yet not of itself, having strength to repel the insidious flood; I say not there is hope, because I know not; the Father knows alone; but who would doubt that to the wretched in life, ground down by temptation, poverty, and the denied wants of mere existence? He will yet afford pardon whose attribute is mercy. Unto thee it is not given to proclaim this message, for it thou hast no warrant; but thou canst plead the hope; this is not denied to thee, and forget not "the effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Follow me.

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"I can look back upon my career and thank myself for everything I possess," said a portly man standing before the fireplace in his own home, whilst his family—two little boys, who looked spiritless and unhealthy, as if the natural course of their being had been somehow averted into the wrong channel—sat at a table, at which, also, was a pale-faced, thin, and ladylike looking woman, who did not

make any answer to the remark, having heard it time after time before.

"Jane, I tell you, I have to thank no one for anything," came again from the portly form of her lord and master.

Yes, Jeremiah; but I think most people prefer having been helped, to depending for everything upon one's self, said the wife meekly.

But I don't feel like other people! Look at me! I rose from the workhouse! I'm not ashamed to own it! Not I—I pride myself upon it! No thanks to anyone; compare me to those sons of mine! When I was their age I was at "*work*" (the last word almost shouted out) earning my own living, 2s. 6d. a-week and one meal a-day, and live out of doors. Ask me how I did it? (no one *had* asked him) Why, sleep in the open air, or a barn, wash in the brook, no *soap* (again hurled at them as if they had done him some injury). What did I want with soap? Waste, I tell you, waste, extravagance; penny loaf and water from the brook—breakfast; to work till dinner-time, then the broken victuals, the same as the dog had; then another loaf with a cup of tea, three times a week—tea; then a potato dipped in salt—supper; then to bed. What did I do to raise myself? What *is* raising oneself, John Saul?

Making a noise, father! (The voice shades weaker than the mother's, in fact, so weak as to be scarcely a voice at all. He said

what he believed *was* "raising oneself," his father's noisy description of it.)

Go to bed without any tea, sir, growled the father. But stay, wait till I've done speaking. Raising oneself is owing no thanks to anybody, and getting money. Before I went to work in the morning, I gathered chickweed for birds, and sold chickweed for birds! and made money by chickweed for birds! Don't forget it (considering they had it repeated about twice every week, they were not likely to forget it). A farthing a-day from four places made a penny a-day; a penny a day, six days a week, made 6d. a week; 6d. a week for six months (twenty-six weeks) made 13s.; added to this, 3d. a week saved for twelve months from the 2s. 6d. a week (fifty-two weeks), 13s., in all 26s. This I gave to a man much in want of money, to teach me his trade—a tallow-chandler. Then I became a workman at good wages, 25s. a week; then foreman, at £2 10s. then partner, because I threatened to take the trade elsewhere; then master; then I married his widow, your mother, my wife; (no degree of satisfaction was expressed by anyone at the facts related, no smile marked the allusion to his wife upon her pale face). I never prayed; prayers are humbug. Those only pray who don't work and work's—life—money. I never stole—its bad policy. I never drank—its bad policy. In the one you get found out—transported; in the other, you let others render you some assistance, and get the better of you. I never lied, except

most safely; because, I found I was not trusted again so readily—its bad policy. I go to church—its good policy! I get custom through it. Church in the morning—chapel in the afternoon (Wesleyan chapel); in the evening, Independent; each brings a connection for candles. I think of developing into two prayer meetings of a week-day evening, two more connections. I don't listen to what they say—they never say anything that applies to me. I don't believe in any religion, or in anything else, except raising oneself and getting money. I sing loudly because that's good policy. I can't read, but I catch the tune, and make everyone look at me. after that I sleep till the sermon, all through the prayers; but keep awake in the sermon—that's good policy, for others are looking about to see who's asleep, then to talk about it. No clergyman ever called on me, I behaved too well before them, my good policy blinded them. Now I write myself Mr. Jeremiah Noggs, L.O.L.W., I hate Esq., or I should take that too, it means a stuck-up, well-dressed person, who is a long time paying his bills, and I hate that especially. I like the L.O.L.W. best, its such a surprise to everyone who never heard it before. The deacon of the chapel asked me to what learned society it referred, meaning to put it into the paper as attending their chapel; I answered, "Late of Lancaster Workhouse." I really thought he would have gone off in a fit, he

looked so astonished. Now, John Saul, to bed—Mrs. Noggs, I'm going.

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I wondered what I was intended to learn from the scene, which had just faded from our sight to my great relief, the repulsive nature of the man, conveying to me nothing but feelings of disgust and abhorrence. Silent at first, the Angel then said, You think such a scene as we have just witnessed, unreal—such a character, an impossibility? your face bears evidence of it. Truly, such open, undisguised developments, are rare, most uncommon; the self-righteousness, the worship, adoration, and belief in one person only, that person—self—is not uncommon, the apparent death in life, the use made, by this man, even of the very forms of religion, for his base grovellings in pelf, are also no rarity; a like love of money, I need not tell you, is shared by thousands. The lesson to be learnt by you, from his life, is to accept, no *seeming* sanctity, as religion, to speak to all alike; thine adversary, the Devil, in his pursuit of souls, follows out no fixed rules, except the one of subtlety; beaten in one field, his tactics are changed, and he tries another; under every guise, under every species of deceit, from the lowest to the highest, from the poorest to the richest, his choice spoil, the great of the earth; it needs man's keenest intellect, God's every grace, the Priest's most earnest endeavours, or the citadel will yield to him sooner or later. Men going to war are watchful and vigilant, have

their arms always ready, and the sentinels around—Priests fighting a more deadly warfare, a battle with a more dreaded opponent, neglect their weapons, allow the citadel to go to sleep, pride themselves upon the little warfare they do, and scent the battle waged faintly—afar off.

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Had I to show you the vision of my next message, I should have to take you into a thousand homes, a thousand of earth's gathering-places; it is to show you the false, the untrue, which are lies, not said verbally, but lies, all equally culpable. Of these are lies of dress, the painted face, the pencilled eyebrow, the false bloom upon the cheek, the false lustre in the eye, the hundred forms which Fashion's blind votaries so eagerly follow. Unreality is the rule; of manner, of speech, of emotion, of friendship, of love, even of worship before the Throne; Reality the exception. Seeming they are not; the naturalness of Nature, is now a manufactured nature, a thing of barter. Affection is a thing of merchandize, at least, the semblance of it; fair daughters are sold to the highest bidder; rank, position, wealth, interest, convenience, each in turn, whichever most valuable, the motive; a lower scale, for those whose barter is not so ready a one, less discrimination, where less demand—such is the world.

To the world "Unreality;" yet unto God—in death, wouldst thou deck the corpse in the falseness in which it has lived, paint, powder,

and tinge its pallid features into a semblance of health to appear before its God? Nay, it would be felt desecration, and yet the image of purity which He has made in His own likeness, suits not, the dissipated sight of mortals, unless its colours are—heightened, its shades more telling, the sickly, wretched arts of poor erring women who try to conceal the ravages their sins and age are making upon their once pure countenances now followed by those, for whom is no excuse, to whom no sense of shame should be too great. Time was when the good, the pure, the noble, the virtuous, were fit objects of imitation; now the Devil rides triumphant, falseness and deception bring him in a glorious harvest, his guile succeeds.

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In this a lesson truly; most generally neglected. If the bare outline of doctrine is set forth, the kernel of practice is oft ignored. Whose is the office to condemn, to hold up to deserved contempt such departures from the moral law of innocence and reality? Again, the world deems the subject a most delicate one, such are the Devil's choice 'vantage grounds. Can purity exist with a painted face? innocence, when the vow given at the Altar of God, was before given to another, but departed from, because a richer prize was found? Purity and innocence are two things required of God, in those who desire Him. He cannot enter polluted hearts. Who are sent to make ready His way before

Him? "Ministers and stewards." Clearly, then, to them is the mission given; theirs is the work; their place is taken by the press, for the teachings of morality in its minor form, minor at first, afterwards the greater God's unordained ministers, stand almost alone. Who is to direct the crusade against the unreality of the world? Some amongst the ranks of God will surely think the little things of their adversary of due importance when they see the success which follows his stratagem. Let thyself be one, and tarry not in thy message. Follow me.

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Amongst the wretched of the earth, through filthy streets and dense life, we wend our way; haggard faces, pale, emaciated children, who bear trace of the disease which they endure within them, the gin palaces reeking with the air of desperation which filled its crowded bars, yet the only cheering light in the street, the only house which bears the least semblance of aught inviting, for there warmth and light were to be obtained, and there, care could be drowned for those who had money, and for those who had none, the chance of someone more affluent inviting them to partake of the reckless inspiring draught. Oh, it was a truly glorious picture of civilization to anyone who, filled with the pride of his century, might have visited it. ("A certain king of glorious memory (?) having himself a superfluity of wives, bethought himself the poor were too rich, so he sent through the country, and

destroyed hundreds of monasteries, from which the needy were fed, by which they were clothed, and which, in spite of some abuses, from which most things earthly are not exempt, were doing God's work of mission to His poor in God's own way. A glorious revenge, thought he; first, on the Priest, who thought adultery in me was a sin; secondly, on the poor, who will now be more dependent upon me, and have less opportunity of worshipping that God whose laws I break. I have pulled down their Churches and cloisters, disturbed their nests of Mercy's sisters, the Church will to me offer now less resistance, and think twice before it again deems me a royal adulterer.") We enter a dilapidated building, which had the appearance of being held together by its neighbours on either side —themselves in a similar condition; but unity is strength. We pass into a little garret at the top of the house. From one small window, the light struggles through dimly; most of the panes having been broken, and repaired merely by rags being stuffed in to keep out the cold. Vain endeavour! The wind whistles through a hundred crevices, some large enough to put a hand through: a roof, low and leaky, a man could scarcely stand upright; damp on the walls, the corners seem to reek with it. A little straw lays in one corner, no other furniture—it had been recently seized for rent, for even this hovel has its price); upon it lays a woman, a perfect skeleton; beside her, a

child, or what was once a baby, now its face looked old with suffering, and silently to itself it sobbed its little griefs; besides, a man with his head between his hands, his elbows resting upon his knees, his back to the straw, for he *dare* not look down upon that sight.

Husband! calls a faint voice from the straw, followed by an attack of that awful sepulchral cough, which the parish doctor knows only too well.

Don't speak to me, Ann, my lass. I can't bear thy voice, it drives me almost mad to feel I can't bring thee honest food. For three months to day have I tramped for work; none Six months has seen the back of everything at the pawnshop! Nothing to eat since yesterday morning, and then a piece of bread between us.

Only for me you mean, Joe, you wouldn't take any; but here's some of it; eat it for my sake—I shan't need it; I don't feel hungry.

But you do, and you must eat it, and I'll go off and try once more. The doctor says ——

What does he say, Joe?

Oh, that you're getting on nicely; and with plenty to eat and all that——

No, Joe, tell me the truth. I don't fear it, its for the best; only to leave you ——

Now, lass, I won't hear it. All you want is a little nourishment, and that I am going to get.

He proceeded down the stairs, after taking a

fond farewell from her: but his face soon lost its look of hope when he had left her presence, and a sullen fierceness came upon it. Bread! he muttered, I will have bread! Come what will, I'll have bread! He hurried along, away into a great suburb, after soliciting vainly for assistance from the passers by, he entered a deserted baker's shop at a corner, and stole a large loaf; the baker rushed forward to seize him, but was felled dead with one of the weights from his own counter, and the man fled with a wild look, and the fierceness of hunger making his face a very demon's—diving away through tortuous streets, his pursuers left miles behind, the wondering passers by clearing out of his path as from a dangerous maniac. He rushed upstairs and into the room, holding the bread, with eager clutch, forward before him. The face turned to him as of yore: but no voice! The eyes, gazing wide open in their intensity, ready to greet him upon his coming—gave no sign of recognition. He seized the hand with gentle haste. Cold! She was dead! O God! the cry broke from the man as he fell at the bedside! Hours passed; the bread was heeded not: at last he rose with determined purpose. No word passed his lips. Once he stooped gently over the infant. The breath came laboured and but faintly—its hours were also numbered. The man brushed away the falling tear from his eyes. He said nothing more. Every crevice was stopped with the straw: the chimney stopped—a work of time

HOME—WHERE POVERTY IS NO CRIME.

for so many holes were there, so many outlets. At last, all finished, he prepares a fire with charcoal, which had been used for purposes before, and had been left in a cupboard. He lights it, and he lays himself down, twining the arms of the dead around his neck. With one arm he envelops his wife's waist, the other draws his child to his breast. Strange and awful scene! The room is dense with the fumes, so stifling, so overpowering: yet no movement. The man's eyes, wakeful and determined, look upon the features of the dead. Yet and yet more dense, and now the fire has caught the boards, and spreads with frightful rapidity: the room is soon enveloped with the flames. The face is yet apparently wakeful: the eyes are open, but the man is dead!

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The rush of the fire engine is heard, and soon the drench of falling water is heard upon that burning hovel: it subsides and is conquered, having made but little way!

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A paragraph the following day in one of the papers stated the fact of the fire, and of three corpses being found quite uninjured—the man and the woman with their eyes open; all three locked in each others arms! It had been supposed the death had resulted from starvation, but an untouched loaf laying by the side told a different tale.

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The murderer was not found, no one

having seen the act; and of those who chased the man who stole the loaf, none saw his face, so the clue was lost, and the coroner's inquest passed the verdict,—"Found murdered, the person or persons who committed the murder, or its cause, being unknown!"

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The Angel said, this is not intended as a lesson for thyself alone, for thy class, for thy profession, or even this vast city; it is intended for all! Oh, Charity! what a golden vehicle art thou to obtain a Godly grace! Thou alone makest wealth noble, when the heart goes with the gift! If but mortals would know the inestimable privilege with which they are endowed (denied even to the very Angels) how eagerly would they embrace its opportunities! The Charity, not only of a gift, but the Charity of life, the kindly word, the loving guidance, the cup of cold water to the thirsty one, the leading back the erring, the leading to the love of Christ—who would not be proud dispensers of this priceless gift of God? Yet, year by year, the cry of dire destitution and misery grows louder and louder: the Charity, although great, is not sufficient; such misery exists as disgrace the very name of Christian as applied to a land! What a field is here for all—some to learn humility, and tend the humble in their necessities; some to realise the value of the gifts God has given them, and to use them aright; some to have their cold hearts touched with a pity more penetrating than

steel, to teach them the lessson that we are not made only for ourselves but for others.

Two attributes of earth alone are desired by the Angels of Heaven, the one to proclaim the salvation of souls by the Man and God, Christ Jesus; the other to minister in sweet Charity to those who need succour, and the cherishing balm of pity! If ye had the eyes of Heaven you would see Christ In His poor, read His life in their lives of suffering, beneath the wretched coverlet, in the emaciated frame would be distinguished true martyrdom—the martyrdom of Christ; earthly rags and ignominy, neglect, wretchedness, want, all failing to conceal the Cross of Christ upon them, that under its shadow they fall asleep. The World calls Charity, pity; Heaven calls it the warfare of the soldiers of heaven—a grand privilege. Who would be of Christ? Let Him feed His sheep. Who would be saved? Let him purify himself with the purification which is of Christ, which, befiting him for the courts of Heaven, unto him shall be given a Crown of life which fadeth not away. In the ministry of the earth forget not that Christ goes with the footsteps of the merciful. Never let thy footsteps flag, thine heart falter, thy spirits fail thee; for He grieves to see His soldiers fearful—faltering when the purse strings are called upon to unclasp the tight hold of earth for deeds of mercy, remember it is He that holdeth the plate, and noteth thine alms. Grace be unto

you, that in this message ye fail not. Follow me.

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Holy Angel, let thy pity descend upon me. Plead for me that repentance for the past, I feel but for which I scarce dare plead myself, yet will draw nigh to ask for pardon. I thought my life a holy one, my mission fulfilled so far as my earthly powers did permit me. I see my error. I repent the past; henceforth my life, if spared unto me, shall be one of intense devotion to my holy calling. The little frailties of age and bodily infirmity shall with me be no excuse for the neglect which they have been. Until the Lord calls me, I will work most faithfully in His vineyard, and pray not to be found wanting. My life is yet spared unto me, it shall be as time redeemed. I cannot recall the past; the future shall be changed.

Others have said the same. Mortal their words have been, as words written upon the shifting sands, which the restless tide washes away. Others emotion, others penitence have been as great as thine—for a time; but the memory has passed away from them; custom been too strong, and they have been lost for ever! Good intentions are the seeds implanted by God in the conscience; for them alone the mortal has no blessing, they are not of himself; but if they are tended and nourished into acts, they and those acts are accepted of God for ever.

The lessons thou hast taught me I pray to be abiding. Of myself, I do not hope; but of

God to obtain the needful strength of purpose. Under His banner I vowed to fight, and fought not. A new vow I register. Unto Thee, O God, I call; accept my prayer. The world, my field; the Devil, mine enemy. To the death, the sins and follies of the world my theme; my victories, souls; my prize, Heaven! In the strength of Heaven I put my trust. My weapons, Thy Word—Thy Life. I vow my life His who made it, to be an instrument for His holy purpose. His to receive, to remain His for ever.

Would'st thou learn more, mortal, neglect not the gifts God has given thee. The world thy study. I have not shown thee all of earthly stain; much of the world's passion remains unrevealed unto thee; but if thou art earnest in His warfare, unto thee shall be given much power, and at last—reward unending.

Holy One, to me alone hast it been permitted thus to read Thy lessons.

Mortal! No. The manner of the message most varied; conscience the means most general; it is yet permitted to us for special purposes and high ends, thus to make known the secrets of the minds and ends of men unto some favoured mortal, who, by special privilege thus realizes his state, and learns from the fates of others. Should he repent and frame his course afresh, of him it is expected that he shall be a great and mighty influence for good—leavening those around him; should he return to his course, from which

the message sent unto him recalled him back, his end more deadly, his punishment far greater than those to whom no such message had been given; his influence for good perverted, he bears the penalty of his own and others' sins—the sins of those whose hopes would have been influenced by his own.

Dost thou need to see the end of such who have thus gone astray, to complete thy lesson? added the Angel, sternly.

No, most Holy One; the lesson is complete. Spare me more. Show me not the end to which I might have come.

I will. I leave thy life before thee.

Would'st thou see one whose message turned to God and Charity one of earth's most grovelling one's, to terminate my message unto thee with the vision of a result which thy life must also show?

I would.

Follow me.

CHAPTER VI.

AWAY, far away, in our swift flight; away from the city, from the haunts of men, from the sullen river, and the stifling streets! Our speed at last relaxes, our journey is ended, and we enter a pretty house, about which the roses climb and mingle with the windows, twining around like beautiful picture frames. The sun shines brightly, the birds are singing! The world comes not here—Nature alone in her beauty gladdens all hearts. We ascend above. A pretty bedroom, with snowy hangings, that told of care and of affection ungrudgingly bestowed. All so pleasant, so white, so fair, so full of loving happiness that it would not have been thought that it was the chamber of death. Yet it was. Upon the bed, lay in a gentle slumber, an old man, whose few grey hairs were moved gently by the breeze as it came gently through the pretty latticed window. A face, which bore old traces of sorrow, but

so changed, not a wrinkle but told of peace and present happiness; and as it lay in slumber, the lips seemed parted with the prayer the face spoke. A hand had strayed over the coverlet, and had remained there gently unclasped; not the hand of a hard man; thin and veined with age, it yet seemed as if its offices had been gentle ones, that its use had been made holy. Known well to most of us, but yet unknown as now; known before the lesson of a life had entered in that stony heart and dissolved it into the milk of human kindness. Scrooge! Not of the office or of 'Change; but Scrooge, having had the lesson of the neglected tombstone, the softening repentant influence of Tiny Tim upon him, rounding the rugged corners of his life.

He preferred to lie there with open window and the sweet scent of flowers coming to him as he lay fronting its breezy opening. He liked to see the bright blue sky the first thing as he awoke; he said it always reminded him of the angels, although where grandfather, (as Tiny Tim had been taught to call him), had seen them no one knew, or could even guess.

The door opens, and gently gliding to the bedside comes Tiny Tim—tiny no longer; for years had rolled away, and he has grown stronger and bigger, although Scrooge insists upon his being called Tiny Tim, still saying he is not big enough yet to change his name, and that he is yet in his sight the same Tiny Tim as of old. The little thin hand glides gently o'er

the face! the voice gently says, "Granny dear!" The eyes open with no start, for Scrooge is always waked thus; the smile deepens upon his pleasant face as he says, Tiny! my boy, bless you.

Now, granny, don't rise, there's a dear; you know you're not strong enough, said Tiny Tim, reprovingly.

Come here, my boy, and lay by my side. I want to tell you something.

Tiny Tim, nothing loth, laid his head upon the pillow, and with his hand played with the few grey locks of Scrooge.

"They were often thus; the childhood of age and the childhood of youth mingling their innocent happiness—thus do the beginning and the end meet."

Tiny, last night I dreamt of years ago, when I lived alone, when I did not even know you, Tiny, and when I was a bad, wicked man.

No, no! Tiny said, he didn't believe that. He could not have that included in the story.

Yes, Tiny, I was a bad man; but I will not say it again, only think of it, as you don't like to hear it.

Tiny would not have it thought, if he must think it, although he should not believe it, he might say it—as a story.

When I was a bad wicked man, who lived only for money and himself, and even himself gained no good by living, I wondered why I had money, and good people, at the same time, were wanting it for good purposes

and yet could not get any, and I thought that it proved everybody but business men, who did not give any time to anything but their business, were idlers and good for nothing, who preyed upon others' hard earned gold. But, Tiny, you'll not think I'm thinking anything like this now; for I've been a changed man since then.

No, granny, I know you're all love now.

One Christmas Eve came, when I left the office as usual; the office, you know, where I took you one day, where your father is head clerk, and my nephew is master.

Yes, granny, uncle Fred.

Yes, Tiny. Well, I went to my house, not my home you know—this is my home; and I saw a dreadful Spirit, who told me that three other Spirits would come to me afterwards.

How very cruel to you, granny.

No, my boy; I always thank that dreadful Spirit, and tell my thanks to God for sending him. Tiny, my dear, those Spirits showed me what a bad man I was. The first of the three showed me a little boy, not any bigger than you, Tiny; and it was me, such a poor little deserted boy, with only his little sister Fan, to love him: then he showed me where I went, when a young man, grown up, you know, Tiny. With me there was some one I loved very much, but who, seeing in me the love of money and business without anything to soften its hold upon me, offered me herself, or money-making, to love; and being mad, you know, Tiny, for a man couldn't be right

who did what I did. I chose the money-making. The second Spirit then came to me, and took me away, through such pleasant places. The first sight of Christmas I had had for many a year, such pleasant greetings, such nice ways, that I wondered no one had said them to me, but I remembered that I had never given them the opportunity. Then we went to see you, Tiny, and your father, and your mother, and your brothers and sisters. You had *such* a goose for dinner! and you sang the prettiest song I had ever heard, and said the nicest wish I'd ever heard too, and yet, I was an old man, and you were a little child, Tiny. "God bless us every one." I don't know whether it did you all as much good as it did me; but if it did, I should think if it was said oftener in the world it would be much nicer for everyone, for there's such a family feeling about it; and, Tiny, we went to your uncle Fred's—the first Christmas visit I had ever paid him; and although I was invited he did not know I was there; but I had such fun; I never knew such games before. I played at forfeits, and should have stayed all night, being invited; but the Spirit took me away in the middle of it.

How very cruel of him, granny.

Yes, Tiny; but he had his work to do, and he almost broke my heart just before he left me — showing me two such poor little creatures, that I have never forgotten their faces since.

Granny, were they two of the little ragged

boys and girls you call, your children, and put in a great house of your own to be clothed and fed?

Yes, Tiny, the same family. Their names were Ignorance and Want. Then came the last and most dreadful Spirit, who was to show me what I should have been if the Spirits had not come to me. Oh, such an awful sight, Tiny. No one to love me, no one to care for me. I died. Those who had done business with me in life wanted the attraction of a dinner, to tempt them to follow me to the grave. Dreadful creatures took the little I had from my dead body, even the hangings from my bed, and sold them. I lay on the bare bed a corpse; the very vermin anticipating their prey, from which no one was there to drive them away? Who cared for the deathbed of the miser?

Tiny, draw closer to me, dear, dear boy. Kiss my face (Scrooge continued, hoarsely). Tiny, he took me to your home again, and I believed you dead—dead through my neglect, dead for want of a little of that of which I had much—money. He showed me, too, my nephew, your uncle Fred, ruined too, for the want of a little of the same—money! Then I saw how money alone cannot bring happiness; that hard coin has no comfort of itself; that the want of it only brings wretchedness; the good use of it adds to happiness; but that of itself, unmixed with human sympathy and love, it is only a tool to lure to destruction. Last of all, Tiny,

he showed me my grave—no, not *my* grave, but what it might have been; such a dreadful spot—such a dreadful sight; thrust in a hole like a pauper, and yet I had lots of money. The tombstone a cheap one; whilst others were fattening on my spoils! All that I had worked for—gone! No one pitied me—no one grieved for me; no one was the better for anything I had ever done! Oh, Tiny! if it had been thus!

Granny, granny, don't cry; you know it wasn't so after all. Don't cry!

Tiny, when—when—I am gone, you will miss your poor old granny Scrooge, shan't you?—and Scrooge wept like a child.

Granny, dear, don't cry, and don't make me cry too, by telling me you are going to leave me. The child cried too. It was difficult to distinguish which of these children had the greater sympathy—the greater love.

Yes, Tiny, I shan't be with you long. I can't bear to leave you, but I've been very very happy since that time when I was a hard-hearted, wicked man; and I have tried to do my best to all of you since. I sometimes think I am hard-hearted, still, when I think upon the past, and feel it is all forgiven to me—there was so much, you know, Tiny, so very much—I wasn't like other men, with some little good inside me, but I had none at all; and, you know, it takes a long time to accustom oneself to the change.

Tiny, you'll come to my grave sometimes, when I'm gone, won't you? faltered Scrooge.

Tiny only sobbed—he could not answer.

And bring a few roses from the home where I have been so happy; and, Tiny, sometimes think of me as—"Poor old Granny—poor old Granny Scrooge, who loved me with all his heart," tremblingly said Scrooge. I feel now more and more, after all these years, of how wicked I was, and am yet, and how merciful it was to me to let me even live for this happiness, even if I died then, as I saw in the past; and even yet, I may die with you near me, Tiny, and be buried where you'll often see my grave. Scrooge buried his face in his hands and sobbed as if his heart would break.

Granny, granny, tell me something happy, which will not make you cry, said Tiny Tim, piteously stroking Scrooge's clasped hands.

Sometimes, Tiny, I think all is forgiven me, because I am so happy, and do not fear to die now, except to leave you, and Bob, and Fred, and all so dear to me. Tiny, my dear, good, loving Tiny, I am a little tired, and will go to sleep; stay with me, Tiny, and say those words I love to hear before I fall asleep.

The trembling voice of Tiny broke the silence for the last time in Scrooge's ears with the prayer that he loved best, "God bless us every one,"—and Scrooge—slept the sleep that knows no waking.

. . . . . .

The bell of the village church tolls for a departed soul!

What grief was in that pretty cottage!

They had come in hours after—Bob Cratchet

EVEN IN DEATH—GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE.

and his wife—and found the loving child, poor Tiny Tim, still clasping with affectionate grief the neck of the dead child, poor old Scrooge; and yet—not poor—for thy life has blossomed in its old age, and was ready for the gathering!

Bob Cratchet, simple as a child, wept with his wife; and disturbed not the love of a life in poor little Tiny Tim, by too rude a shock, leaving him to wake,—and then to feel his loss.

* * * * * * * * *

A funeral; plain, and yet a funeral such as any of us, my readers, may wish for; all friends following, even the bearers, those whom we have loved in life, for Bob Cratchet and Scrooge's nephew, Fred, would let none other touch his coffin. Tiny Tim and all were there. Villagers who had heard not of Scrooge's earlier life, and had known him only to love him, wondered at the goodness which must have been his, to call out such affection. No dry eye was there. Tiny Tim laid a wreath of roses upon the coffin, and would have flung himself upon it in his passionate grief, had not they withheld him.—Most truly could it be said of him, "In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," for nobly had he redeemed his time.

* * * * * * * * *

Scrooge's virtues live after him—charities and generosities innumerable. He retired from his business after that memorable Christmas Eve, and in his place he placed his

nephew, making only one restriction—that every Christmas Eve was to be spent in as jolly a manner, as he had himself joined in, when in the Spirit's company. Bob Cratchet he made foreman, with a salary that Bob never knows how to spend, without the aid of as many kindnesses shown to others as he has experienced himself. Men upon 'Change thought Scrooge had gone mad! What a glorious madness! His will, strange to say, particularised his bed-furniture, as one of the legacies to Bob Cratchet's wife, and also stated how the plain, but pretty cross, which stood over his grave, should be inscribed—

IN

Memory of

SCROOGE,

(RELICT OF THE FIRM SCROOGE AND MARLEY)

A HARD, GRASPING MAN IN EARLIER LIFE,
HE LIVED TO SEE HIS FOLLY, AND
LIVE FOR OTHERS.
HIS LIFE A LESSON TO ALL WHO READ,
BECAME MOST CHANGED ON
CHRISTMAS EVE.

. . . . . .

I had been so absorbed in the death and burial of Scrooge, that I observed not that from my side the Angel had gone, and I was left alone. I have always thought that his mission to me accomplished, he bore the soul of Scrooge to its last home.

I felt to miss some final word of cheering comfort for the future, and wearied with my journey, and the emotion through which I

had undergone, and the traces of which were still deeply impressed in my heart, resolves for the future; how I know not—where I know not; but I fell asleep.

. . . . . .

The Canon was a subject of astonishment to every one: how, or what had influenced him, people knew not—transformed his very being, as every one said, in one night.

On Christmas Day he preached such a sermon as was never heard before in those time honoured walls. People said that they could not believe it was the Canon! Such probings into hard hearts, and unfoldings of dark consciences were there, as to leave none alone. Every one said "They didn't think it was in him," and pondered upon his words to their spiritual and temporal comfort. The poor loved him; they said he understood them as none other did. His life was a changed one. His Master's work was his one theme. Morning, noon and night he worked, unwearied, and with untiring energy. Most charitable, he never would allow his gift to be known to others, and had a great repugnance to the donation board in the Cathedral. He termed it the hypocrisy of charity. He also had a great dislike to epitaphs, except the most simple, terming them an adulation which might or might not be deserved, but which should not appear over the dead when this world's passage was o'er. He lived respected, loved, admired, and as an example to all around him; and, although his subjects

for sermons were most winning, most spiritual, although he probed to repentance the very hearts of men, no one knew the cause of the sudden change which came over him; and, as no allusion was ever made to it by himself, they could only call it—as they did call it—

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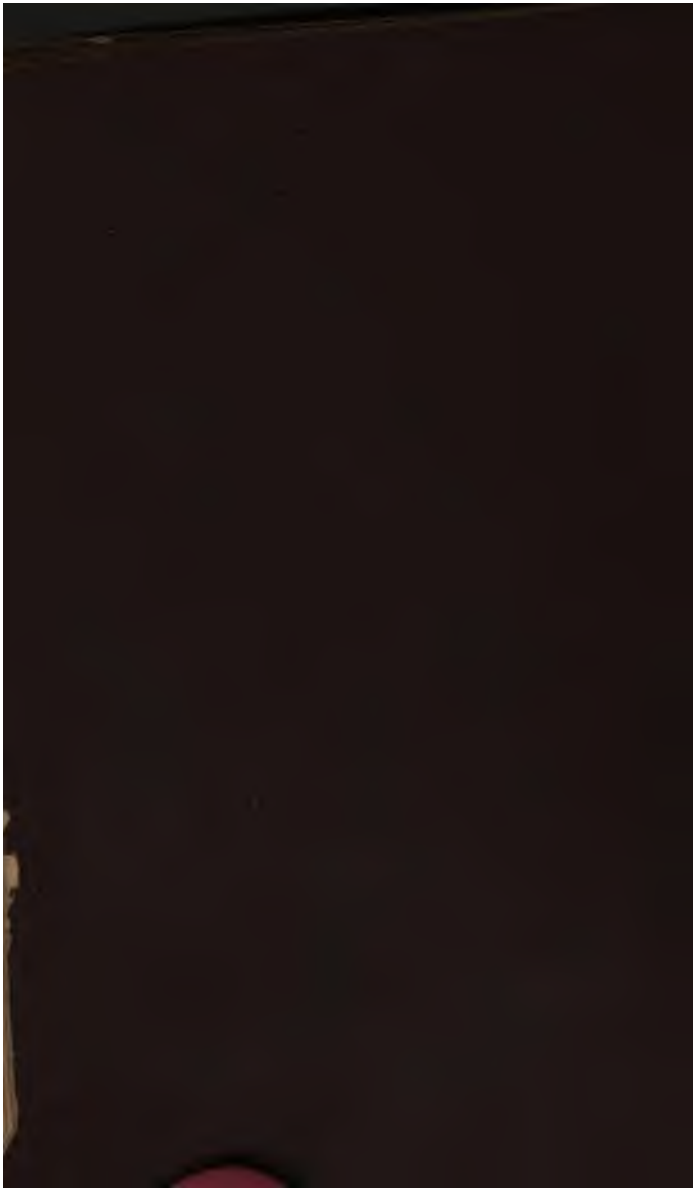

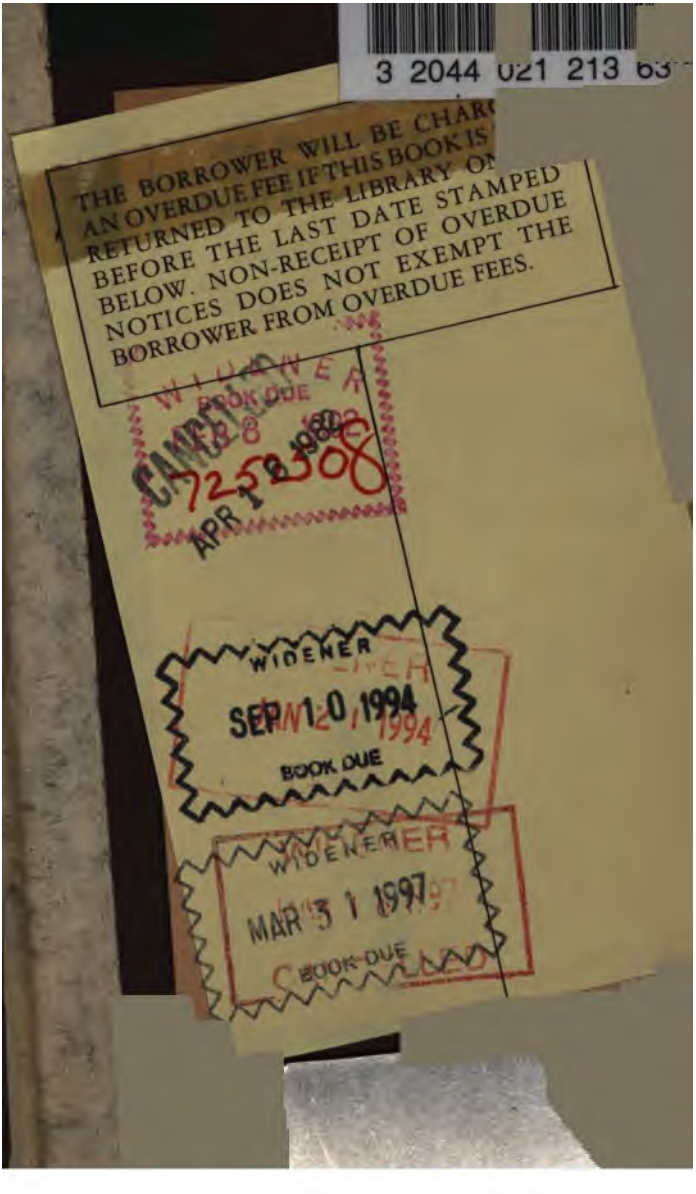

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